

Application No.: 09/990,262**Docket No.: 2038-280****AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:*****1-14. (cancelled)*****15. (previously presented) A disposable undergarment, comprising:**

a liquid-pervious topsheet, a liquid-impervious backsheet and a liquid-absorbent core disposed between the topsheet and backsheet;

a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending longitudinally of said undergarment between the front and rear waist regions, said crotch region having transversely opposite side edges curving inward transversely of said undergarment to define peripheral edges of leg-openings of said undergarment;

said core including a front end zone, a rear end zone, and a middle zone extending longitudinally of said undergarment between the front and rear end zones, said middle zone being completely located in said crotch region, said front end zone extending from said middle zone toward said front waist region, and said rear end zone extending from said middle zone toward said rear waist region;

a first elastic member extending transversely of said undergarment, along a front end portion of one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region, across said front end zone of said core, and along a front end portion of the other of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region;

a second elastic member extending transversely of said undergarment, along a rear end portion of one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region, across said rear end zone of said core, and along a rear end portion of the other of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region;

wherein

a stiffness of said core is lower in the front and rear end zones than in the middle zone;

said first elastic member has a central portion underlying said front end zone of said core

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and being attached under tension to said backsheet; and

said first elastic member further has end portions on opposite sides of said central portion, each of the end portions of said first elastic member extending along the front end portion of one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region, a tensile stress of said first elastic member being greater in the end portions than in the central portion.

16. (previously presented) A disposable undergarment, comprising:

a liquid-pervious topsheet, a liquid-impervious backsheet and a liquid-absorbent core disposed between the topsheet and backsheet;

a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending longitudinally of said undergarment between the front and rear waist regions, said crotch region having transversely opposite side edges curving inward transversely of said undergarment to define peripheral edges of leg-openings of said undergarment;

said core including a front end zone, a rear end zone, and a middle zone extending longitudinally of said undergarment between the front and rear end zones, said middle zone being completely located in said crotch region, said front end zone extending from said middle zone toward said front waist region, and said rear end zone extending from said middle zone toward said rear waist region;

a first elastic member extending transversely of said undergarment, along a front end portion of one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region, across said front end zone of said core, and along a front end portion of the other of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region;

a second elastic member extending transversely of said undergarment, along a rear end portion of one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region, across said rear end zone of said core, and along a rear end portion of the other of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region;

wherein

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a stiffness of said core is lower in the front and rear end zones than in the middle zone;
said second elastic member has a central portion underlying said rear end zone of said core and being attached under tension to said backsheet; and
said second elastic member further has end portions on opposite sides of said central portion, each of the end portions of said second elastic member extending along the rear end portion of one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region, a tensile stress of said second elastic member being greater in the end portions than in the central portion.

17. (previously presented) A disposable undergarment, comprising:
a liquid-pervious topsheet, a liquid-impervious backsheet and a liquid-absorbent core disposed between the topsheet and backsheet;
a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending longitudinally of said undergarment between the front and rear waist regions, said crotch region having transversely opposite side edges curving inward transversely of said undergarment to define peripheral edges of leg-openings of said undergarment;
said core including a front end zone, a rear end zone, and a middle zone extending longitudinally of said undergarment between the front and rear end zones, said middle zone being completely located in said crotch region, said front end zone extending from said middle zone toward said front waist region, and said rear end zone extending from said middle zone toward said rear waist region;
a first elastic member extending transversely of said undergarment, along a front end portion of one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region, across said front end zone of said core, and along a front end portion of the other of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region;
a second elastic member extending transversely of said undergarment, along a rear end portion of one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region, across said rear end zone of said core, and along a rear end portion of the other of said transversely opposite side edges

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of said crotch region;

wherein a stiffness of said core is lower in the front and rear end zones than in the middle zone, and each of said first and second elastic members includes:

a central portion underlying the respective one of said front and rear end zones of said core and being attached under tension to said backsheet; and

end portions on opposite sides of said central portion, each of the end portions extending along the respective one of said front and rear end portions of one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region, wherein a tensile stress of the end portions is greater than that of the central portion.

18. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 16, further comprising third elastic members attached under tension to said undergarment, each of said third elastic members extending longitudinally of said undergarment, between said first and second elastic members, and along one of said transversely opposite side edges of said crotch region.

19. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 18, wherein each of the third elastic members extends between, without contacting or crossing, the first and second elastic members.

20. (withdrawn) The undergarment according to claim 18, wherein an entire area of said topsheet is smaller than that of said backsheet and greater than an entire area of an upper surface of said core.

21. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 16, wherein said first and second elastic members are not directly attached to the topsheet.

22. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 18, wherein said crotch

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region has a linear area extending perpendicular to a longitudinal direction of said undergarment and continuously from one of the transversely opposite side edges to the other of the transversely opposite side edges, said area being free of said first, second, and third elastic members.

23. (withdrawn) The undergarment according to claim 18, wherein said backsheet has at least two material layers including an upper layer and a lower layer, said first and second elastic members are sandwiched between said upper and lower layers, and said third elastic members are sandwiched between said upper layer and said topsheet.

24. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 16, wherein the first and second elastic members are spaced apart in a longitudinal direction of said undergarment without contacting or crossing each other.

25. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 24, wherein a closest distance between said first and second elastic members as measured in said longitudinal direction is greater than a half of an entire extent of said core as measured in said longitudinal direction.

26. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 16, wherein a density of said core is lower in the front and rear end zones than in the middle zone.

27. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 16, wherein a basic weight of said core is lower in the front and rear end zones than in the middle zone.

28. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 17, wherein said core is placed substantially in the crotch section, and the first and second elastic members extend in circular arcs towards the longitudinally middle zone of the crotch region.

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29. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 28, wherein said middle zone of said core, as measured in a longitudinal direction of said undergarment, is longer than both said front and rear end zones of said core.

30. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 28, further comprising, in the front and rear waist regions, a plurality of parallel auxiliary elastic members extending in a transverse direction of said undergarment, all of the auxiliary elastic members in the front waist regions being forwardly spaced in a longitudinal direction of said undergarment from the front end zone of said core, and all of the auxiliary elastic members in the rear waist regions being rearwardly spaced in the longitudinal direction from the rear end zone of said core.

31. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 28, further comprising, in the front and rear waist regions, a plurality of parallel auxiliary elastic members extending in a transverse direction of said undergarment, wherein none of said auxiliary elastic members underlie said core.

32. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 17, wherein said middle zone of said core, as measured in a longitudinal direction of said undergarment, is longer than both said front and rear end zones of said core.

33. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 17, further comprising, in the front and rear waist regions, a plurality of parallel auxiliary elastic members extending in a transverse direction of said undergarment, all of the auxiliary elastic members in the front waist regions being forwardly spaced in a longitudinal direction of said undergarment from the front end zone of said core, and all of the auxiliary elastic members in the rear waist regions being rearwardly spaced in the longitudinal direction from the rear end zone of said core.

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34. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 32, further comprising, in the front and rear waist regions, a plurality of parallel auxiliary elastic members extending in a transverse direction of said undergarment, wherein none of said auxiliary elastic members underlie said core.

35. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 16, wherein a central portion of said first elastic member underlies said front end zone of said core and is directly attached under tension to said backsheet.

36. (currently amended) The undergarment according to claim 15, wherein the stiffness of said core in the entire front and rear end zones is lower than [[that]] in the entire middle zone.

37. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 16, wherein the stiffness of said core in an entire area of the rear end zone, which area is located immediately above the central portion of said second elastic member, is lower than the stiffness of the core in the middle zone.

38. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 37, wherein the core has a substantially uniform thickness in said area and the vicinity thereof.

39. (previously presented) The undergarment according to claim 37, wherein the rear end zone of said core has a substantially uniform thickness in said area and from said area to a curved rear edge of said core.